

**Minutes of Watab Township Annual Meeting
Tuesday, March 09, 2010**

The Annual Meeting of Watab Township was called to order by Clerk Pat Spence at pm on Tuesday, March 9, 2010 at the Watab Town Hall. Audience members present were: Duane & Rosie Johnson, John F. Olson, Maureen Graber, Craig & Jana Gondeck, Pat & Guy Spence, Lloyd & Debbie Erdmann, Louie LeBlanc, Paul Jacobs, Ray Thompson, Allen & Sandra Saldana, Delroy & Donna Rothstein, Lucy Palmer, Eileen Saldana, Ed Kacures Jr., Mary Isaacs, Ralph & Marian Berger, Gary Aschenbrenner, Mary L. Popp, Rob Jacobs, Don Landwehr, Brian & Wendy Erdmann, JoAnn Baumgart, Keith O'Brien, Ray Thompson, Phillip J. Nelson, Richard Koll, Commissioner Joe Wollak, Charles R. Manthey, Ed & Carol Gnifkowski, Ray Schlichting, Ed Kacures, Clifford Weitgenant, Ronald C. Hommerding, Al Voigt, and Brian Schoenherr.

The first item of business was election of a Moderator. Ray Thompson was unanimously elected. A motion was made by Ed Gnifkowski and seconded by Lucy Palmer to approve the agenda; motion passed. The minutes of the 2009 Annual Meeting Minutes were approved as written on a motion by Craig Gondeck and second by Mary Popp; motion passed.

Clerk Pat Spence presented the Board of Audit Report. After questions and discussion, a motion was made Ed Gnifkowski and seconded by Sandy Saldana to approve the report; motion passed.

Supervisor Lloyd Erdmann gave a report on all the 2009 road projects. He asked for questions: Louie LeBlanc questioned why the town board approved construction of Fifth Avenue. Ed Gnifkowski asked Lloyd if he knew why the county engineer is having another meeting on the County Rd 55 project. Lloyd did not know. Ed & Louie discussed pros & cons of Fifth Avenue bike lanes. Maureen Graber said that she came to almost all the monthly meetings and knew the town board worked very hard on the road projects, and she really appreciates their work. Craig Gondeck answered Ed's question about the County Road 55 meeting saying that the county engineer's ideas about the road are still the same, but he wants to meet with the people who live on the road about the timing of the project and to review it. Lloyd Erdmann discussed the wear coats on Fifth Avenue that are planned for 2010. Bids will be taken this spring with an anticipated cost of \$100,000. Clerk Spence stated that Lake Andrew Development has an assessment for the turn lanes that hasn't been paid yet. Lloyd Erdmann asked for suggestions for road repairs for the coming year. Ralph Berger said that there is a large hole where 105th Street meets River Road, and that he has reported it over a long period of time. Ed Kacures said that the county didn't have the manpower to take care of the repair this past year, but they have said they will fix it this year. Lloyd Erdmann suggested that we have a local contractor fill the hole in the meantime. Ray Thompson asked about the Plaziak railroad crossing saying that there is a large drop off on each side by the tracks. Allen Saldana said that all our crossings are like that. Lloyd Erdmann said that he would contact the railroad about this issue.

Requests from Non-Profit organizations for donations:

1. Keith O'Brien represented Rice Recreation and asked for \$2,000 or whatever the township could afford. The School District used to fund this organization and it cut funding two years ago. Keith said he plans on coming every year to request a donation. He presented handouts summarizing the Rice Recreation program to be distributed to the town board. Ed G asked for a brief recap of the programs offered. The ice rink costs about \$4,500 to \$5,000. Summer ball costs between \$4,800 and \$6,000. \$2,000 to \$2,300 has come in from fees. Young children have ball at Rice Elementary and older children at Lion's Park. Keith said that he will give the township a report in June on how many kids participated from Watab Township, or he could come in August to give a wrap up on the whole season. He said there is a great turn out of youth from Watab. Mary Isaacs asked if Rice & Langola donate. Keith said that both do and that Langola also contributed \$2,000 last year. Elementary school parents have done maintenance by the school ball fields;

the City takes care of the ball fields at Lions Park. Mary Isaacs said that she isn't in favor of donating her tax dollars for recreation, but she said that it's very important to have these activities for kids. Deb Erdmann said that she believes Keith is doing a great job, and she made a motion for the township to donate \$2,000; Rob Jacobs said that he's in favor of putting it in annual budgets and people shouldn't have to come in and beg each year, because it's a great program. Ed Gnifkowski suggested that recreation needs change over the years and venues change and he thinks an update report each year is good. Craig Gondeck seconded the motion and it passed. Keith said that he will report to the town board on Watab youth participation at the August meeting.

2. The Clerk read a letter of request from Benton County Agricultural Society for the county fair. All agreed that the fair board should have sent a representative to the meeting. Ed Gnifkowski made a motion to deny the request, seconded by Marion Berger, and passed.
3. Since no one was present to make a request for Tri County Humane Society, a motion was made by Gary Aschenbrenner, seconded by Ed Gnifkowski to give no donation. Motion passed.
4. Guy Spence represented the Little Rock Lake Association. He requested \$1,200 for creating buffer strips around the lake, a significant way he said that the association can help clean up the lake. Membership has increased from 108 to 232 members who each pay \$25 dues during the past year. Education meetings took place during last summer on planting buffer strips; they helped plant the Benton Beach Pond buffer strip, and a buffer strip of 200 feet on the south end of the lake. Currently there are seven planted buffer strips around the lake. During the past three years, LRLA has supported Benton County doing the TMDL study on pollutants in the lake. When the results come later this year, the LRLA will know more detailed things to do to help clean up the lake. Once the association has the information, they will develop a further plan. Buffer strips filter the pollutants from lawns and reduce lawn erosion. Buffer strips also prevent Canadian geese from walking on the lawns. The association received a \$5,000 grant from the Initiative Foundation for buffer strips. They also received money last year from Watab Township. Another representative from the association is at Langola Township tonight making a request for \$1,200. Donations will also be used for education. Volunteers from the Lake Association will help plan and plant the buffer strips. They can be attractive landscape features with native flowers and decorative grasses at the height the landowner desires. If anyone with lake shore is interested, please contact Guy Spence or Maureen Graber. Ed G. asked for an update on septic system monitoring. Guy said that the TMDL study will show where septic runoff is originating. Ed also asked if homes are being elevated on the west side of the lake. Guy said that some individual land owners are doing this but the LRLA isn't involved. Louie LeBlanc addressed the agricultural runoff and said he thought it would be simpler to enact an ordinance to prohibit the use of lawn fertilizer. Ed G said education is a big thing, and Guy agreed that is an important role of the LRLA. Paul Jacobs asked if the township is setting precedence by helping individual property owners. Guy said that the lake benefits everyone, so assisting with buffer strips on private property will help everyone. Maureen Graber said that the property owners involved sign a contract that they'll keep the buffer strip intact for at least 15 years. She added that if septic systems are poisoning the lake, the county will be assigned by the MPCA to deal with the problem. A donation from the township will meet the requirements for Watab's MS4 plan, so she highly recommends the donation. There was also discussion about curly leaf pond weed. Cliff Weitnegant made a motion to donate \$1,200, seconded by Louie LeBlanc, and motion passed.

Citizen's Issues:

1. Ed Gnifkowski said that Henkemeyer's Landfill started a fire and it's been burning for 10 days. He challenged our supervisors to attend the Benton County hearing on renewal of the

landfill permit because of violations. Lloyd Erdmann said that Henkemeyer's are asking for a permit for continuous burning. He burns construction material, mobile homes, etc. and should only be burning brush. Lloyd said he wants it operated with integrity. Ray Thompson discussed the permits that should be followed. Ed Gnifkowski said that our supervisors should attend the meeting and say that the consensus of the township is that his permit be denied. He wants it closed and that it not be allowed over 12 feet. Ed Gnifkowski made a motion for the supervisors to go to the hearing. Rosie Johnson said that Ed should also go to the hearing. Ed responded that he would go and support the supervisors. Mary Isaacs said that she totally agrees and seconded the motion, because she said the fires go on for days on end. She said it's up to us to put a stop to it. The meeting is March 16th at the courthouse in Foley at 7pm. Motion passed.

Levies:

1. The town board recommended that the General Fund levy be \$100,000. Paul Jacobs said there should be discussion about it. Louie LeBlanc said that \$25 an hour is too much pay for the supervisors and that he hadn't voted for that rate when he was on the town board. Ron Hommerding said that City of St. Cloud has engineers on duty 100% of time on road projects. Clerk Spence said that there was a lot of board discussion about having the engineer versus supervisors do some of the work on the road projects. It is much less expensive for the township to have the supervisors do the work they can versus paying the engineer \$150 per hour. Lloyd Erdmann explained that township supervisors can go out and get easements from property owners for \$25 per hour versus \$150 per hour for the engineer. Ed Kacures said that there was a lot of trouble with the contractor and subcontractor and residents getting stuck. He said that he scheduled weekly meetings at the hall with the engineer and contractors so that the supervisors would know what was going on. There were many issues that had to be handled on site. Paul Schwinghammer said that he was one of the first to raise a red flag on Fifth Avenue, and he recommended that the township board manage it on site. He pleaded with them because of impaired waters in that area and violations and it was going in the wrong direction big time. Brian Erdmann said that the Engineer should have supervised it. Craig Gondeck said that he filled out the MPCA permit and he didn't want any violations because they would have come in his name. He thanked Paul. At one time a fire truck could not get in there and he thanked the residents for their patience. Ed Gnifkowski said that the township has a history of trouble hiring road and bridge contractors. He gave a bit of history. In future projects he said there should be more due diligence on the general contractor. Delroy Rothstein said that it was an extremely difficult project because of the weather. Everyone on the road knew it would be difficult but Knife River probably didn't do due diligence. He commends the supervisors for holding the contractor's feet to the fire and getting them to do what they were supposed to do; they cared; they listened; they kept the peace; and he thinks the township did the right thing. The supervisors pay was cheap. In response to comments from Louie LeBlanc about not rebuilding Fifth Avenue, Ray Thompson said that people who live on the township roads should have something to say about how their roads are kept. Lloyd Erdmann said that Knife River is a reputable bidder and the town board couldn't throw out their bid. The dirt mover was working on a county road with trouble and that snowballed the problems!! Mary Popp questioned if the engineer had enough soil borings done. Maureen Graber said that the town board does a great job and know what they're doing, and she made a motion to recommend the levy of \$100,000; Rob Jacobs seconded. Motion passed with four opposed.
2. Road and Bridge Fund: Ed Gnifkowski moved for a levy of \$200,000 for the Road and Bridge Fund; seconded by Maureen Graber; motion passed.

3. Louie LeBlanc made the motion, seconded by Don Landwehr to set a Fire Fund levy at \$75,000; and motion passed.
4. Louie LeBlanc made the motion, seconded by Craig Gondeck to set the Building Fund levy at \$25,000; and motion passed.

Craig Gondeck, Benton County Service Agent for the Salvation Army, gave the Benton County Salvation Army Service Award to Eileen Saldana, Watab Township Treasurer, praising and thanking her for all her volunteer work in the community and her church. He presented her with a certificate, and Eileen received a round of applause.

The Clerk gave the preliminary election report. There were 302 voters. Craig Gondeck was elected with 197 votes for a three-year term as Supervisor; Mary Isaacs, his opponent received 105 votes. Pat Spence was elected to a two-year term as Clerk with 263 votes. There were six write-in votes for Clerk: Scot Vogt, Monte Hall, Jim Hoihjelle, anyone, Peggy Hommerding, and Renee Zeleny.

Craig Gondeck reported that he is organizing the 4th Watab History Day for a date in October. It will be a reunion of the King's Inn Supper Club employees.

Craig Gondeck reported that he wrote a \$17,000 grant application for Watab Clean Up Day, which has been approved by Benton County. Clean Up Day will be at Rockwood Estates on September 18th. No hazardous waste will be accepted.

Lloyd Erdmann made a proposal to have the township license garbage haulers for different districts within the township, because he said that a lot of our township roads have many different garbage haulers & recycling trucks going down them. There can be ten trucks a week on each road. He recommends dividing the township into areas to save wear and tear on our roads, especially this time of the year. This is a safety issue. He said that he brought it up last year and it wasn't accepted, but he wanted to bring it back up again this year. Mary Isaacs said that she thinks it's a good idea, but asked how the town board would communicate it well to the township residents, so that everyone would understand it. Lloyd said that he doesn't want the township to be in the garbage billing business, but we could license the various garbage haulers for the different areas. Many cities do this. Lloyd said that there are 5 different garbage haulers' businesses that pick up on Sucker Creek Road where he lives. Ed G. said that the township has to be involved and he agrees that it would be a good idea to study it. It should be in the garbage hauler's best interest as well. Ed Kacures said that it came up again, because of the supervisors' time on Fifth Avenue and seeing how many garbage haulers were trying to access that road. He thinks that this might really save on our roads. Paul Jacobs made a motion for Lloyd to go ahead and study it and not to implement until the residents know what the cost is. JoAnn Baumgart seconded it. Rosie asked if we'd have one hauler for the whole township or several different ones. Lloyd said he'd favor different haulers in different areas. Brian Erdmann said we'd have to get a per can bid for the various sizes. Ed G thought there should be a public hearing. Craig Gondeck said that Foley got a better bid by having one hauler. Mary Isaacs said that she has her business bid every few years. Researching with other cities would be good. We have 43 miles of road in the township. Ed G recommended 2 to 3 haulers but said to research it. Motion passed.

Ed Kacures said that our Benton County Commissioner, Joe Wollak, would like to speak. He gave a report from the county. He talked about the hiring freeze, department heads cutting budgets, and said the board is looking at having open forums prior to the 2011 budget because they don't want to raise taxes. They'll ask for input on where they should cut. He covered the license bureau losing money, furloughs, and union negotiations; he said they have a budget balancing plan. Sentence to Serve is a money saving program, and Governor Pawlenty is proposing cutting that program effective July 1. He recommends writing letters to legislators to keep it. Craig Gondeck asked if the license bureau could be moved to a non-elected official to make it a money-making proposition because he knows that Ben Laterall made a lot of money at it. Pat Spence asked Commissioner Wollak about the county's reserves. Joe did not know the total amount, but he said he would get back to her with the information.

Ed Gnifkowski made a motion, Craig Gondeck seconded, to use the Sauk Rapids Herald for legal publications. Motion passed.

The Clerk reported on the current posting places. Rosie Johnson said that notices haven't been posted on the outside town hall posting place. The Clerk said access to the sign has been difficult because of the lock not working well and the deep snow leading to the sign. Ed Gnifkowski made a motion, seconded by Gary Aschenbrenner to have posting places be the outdoor sign (or inside of front door of hall when necessary), Channel 3, and the website. Motion passed.

Supervisor Gondeck said that people have asked questions about the Sentence to Serve Crew doing work in the township. They have a chance to get out of their cells and the time served goes toward their restitution. They are carefully screened before they go out and are often in jail for crimes such as writing bad checks and other minor crimes where they wouldn't be dangerous to citizens. They have saved the township a lot of money because there is no charge for their services and they have done brushing and tree trimming. He encourages everyone to send a letter to legislators to keep the program. Ed G asked if we could post on our website a sample letter that residents could copy and send to legislators. Clerk Pat Spence will draft a letter.

The Annual Meeting and Election for 2011 was set for March 8th with polls open from 11am until 8pm and the annual meeting at 8pm through a motion by Craig Gondeck and second by Ed Gnifkowski. Motion passed.

Moderator Ray Thompson announced that the Watab Town Board of Equalization will be April 28th at 9:30am.

Craig Gondeck said that he received a new donation board from Twin Pines for the town hall that shows all the grants received. His wife and daughter have listed grants received so far. Twin Pines donated the sign.

Ed Gnifkowski made a motion for the meeting to adjourn at 10:30am; motion seconded by Gary Aschenbrenner and passed.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Spence Clerk